



## What is “right of way?”

State maintained right of way is property along a roadway on either side of the road. This area does not belong to individual property owners. It must be kept clear for motorist safety and so road crews will have room to work.

VDOT provides permits for all\* roadside advertising (billboards, church signs\*\*, etc.) in the commonwealth, whether on public or private property. There are guidelines for sign size, space, lighting, location and other characteristics even without a permit.

\* With the exception of some cities and towns.

\*\* Some churches may be exempt.

## Where is the right of way located?

There is no standard right of way distance for every road. Generally, the right of way ranges from 25-150 feet from the road’s center line. Due to this wide range, it’s important to find out the exact right of way distance before installing a sign or object near a road.

## How do I obtain a right of way permit?

You can obtain a permit from the permit section at your local VDOT Residency. Find out which VDOT Residency is responsible for your area by visiting [www.virginiadot.org/about](http://www.virginiadot.org/about) then “Find your local VDOT office.”

Companies, organizations or individuals who want to place signs or objects on several locations around the state would need to contact VDOT’s Central Office at (804) 786-2801 or by e-mailing [vdotinfo@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:vdotinfo@vdot.virginia.gov).

If granted a permit, it will be sent directly to the applicant.

## What will happen if I put my sign in the right of way without a permit?

### *Section 33.1-373 of the Highway Laws of Virginia* states, in part, that:

“Any person who ... puts, places or affixes any advertisement upon or to any [item or place] within the limits of any highway shall be assessed a civil penalty of \$100. Each occurrence shall be subject to a separate penalty. Advertisements placed within the limits of the highway are hereby declared a public and private nuisance and may be forthwith removed, obliterated, or abated by the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner or his representatives without notice.”

It is **illegal** to place signs on state-maintained right of way without a permit, regardless of whether a locality has a three-day ordinance or other outdoor advertising law. VDOT is authorized to remove any signs that are in violation of the state law, especially if it interferes with roadside maintenance or presents a safety hazard to motorists. In addition, the agency can levy a \$100 fine per sign as needed. VDOT also works with localities and the Adopt-A-Highway program to help enforce this law.

**When in doubt,  
call to find out!**